LINCOLN
THE GREATEST MAN OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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YOU may possibly be interested in knowing how this study of a great man's life originally came about. When the new century was ushered in the event was celebrated in San Francisco at a large banquet for men at the Merchants' Club. The Committee of Arrangements provided four addresses on "The Achievements of the Nineteenth Century." Dr. David Starr Jordan, President of Stanford University, was asked to speak on "The Greatest Scientific Discovery of the Nineteenth Century." He very naturally named "The Principle of Organic Evolution" and de-

voted his address to indicating the bearing of that principle upon scientific thought during the closing decades of the century. Professor Charles M. Gayley, the head of the English Department in the University of California, was asked to speak on "The Greatest Book of the Nineteenth Century." He at once excluded all scientific works as not belonging to pure literature. After discussing the merits of various authors he named Goethe's "Faust" as the greatest literary production of the hundred years. Mr. Fairfax H. Whelan, a business man in San Francisco, was asked to speak on "The Greatest Mechanical Invention of the Nineteenth Century." He surprised us all—and no one knew in advance what choice any one of the four speakers had made. We expected something of an electrical nature, but he named "Bessemer Steel," the cheaper process of converting pig iron into steel, on the ground of its wider util-

ity. He maintained that the greatest invention was the one which served the interests of the largest number of people. I was asked to speak that evening on "The Greatest Man of the Nineteenth Century"; and the after-dinner speech that night has by that same process of "organic evolution" gradually shaped itself into the longer address contained in this little book.

It might seem a futile task to seek to name the greatest man in any century. It is not easy to compare one great man with another. And "Comparisons are odorous," Dogberry said. His English was a trifle lame, but he had a show of facts on his side. Those earnest debates which we used to have thirty or forty years ago in the country lyceums as to which was the greater man, Columbus who discovered this country or Washington who fathered it, did not really get us anywhere. They gave the young budding

orators a chance to get on their legs and try their powers, but the purpose of the discussion was defeated by the difficulty of reducing the various fractions of the total human achievement to a common denominator so that they might be compared. It is not easy to compare a great military commander with a man who is great in literature; or a great statesman with a great scientist. Yet straight in the face of all of these difficulties I am undertaking to name to you the greatest man of the Nineteenth Century and to justify my choice, if I may, at the bar of your own judgment.

We live in an age of analysis and comparison. The heavens declared the glory of God to our remote ancestors who knew very little about them except that they were beautiful. In these days we have learned to map out the paths the planets take. We know how to weigh accurately their huge bulk. We can measure the dis-

tances of those heavenly bodies from us and from each other. By our spectrum analysis we can even determine the very fuel they burn. And because of this more competent knowledge which we possess the heavens declare the glory of God to us yet more effectively. In like manner our appreciation of human excellence is heightened by the application of analysis and comparison to the essential elements in personal greatness.

In entering upon this discussion I would offer these considerations as furnishing us a valid principle of selection. We may say that a great man is a man who makes some significant period of history different from what it would have been apparently but for his influence. Then when we come to measure the size of that section of history, the value of the interests involved and the permanence of the work accomplished, we may readily determine the degree of his greatness. If in all those three

regards he stands higher than any other man of his time, he may justly be regarded as the greatest man of the period.

Now we find in the Nineteenth Century a certain historic event which in my judgment was the most significant and influential occurrence of the hundred years. I refer to the Civil War fought out here in our own land in 1861-65. You may measure that war any way you please—by the extent and value of the territory at stake; or by the number of men in the field, exceeding that of any modern war until the recent Great War in Europe; or by the conscientiousness and enlightenment of the opposing hosts —it was a war fought not by paid mercenaries, but by citizens who knew why they were there and for what they were fighting; or by the far-reach of the principles involved in their bearing upon the fate of a great nation threatened with disruption, upon the interest of human free-

dom and upon the cause of democracy touching as it does the development of the rank and file of the race—you may measure that war any way you please and I believe you will regard it as the most significant occurrence of the century.

Now, in bringing the various issues in that war to a successful conclusion—in freeing four millions of our fellow-beings from slavery; in preserving a government which stands perhaps as the nearest approach to a successful democracy on a large scale thus far in history; and in closing the debate upon certain questions which had troubled this Republic for decades and now trouble it no more—in bringing those issues to a conclusion many great men wrought together and the credit for the outcome does not belong solely to any one man of the group.

It was a gigantic task to bring a free, prosperous and resolute people, intelligently and conscientiously divided in their

political judgment, to submit to the will of the majority as expressed on the field of battle and then to go on together. To go on in what has proved to be not slumbering hatred nor smoldering rebellion, but in actual, growing, joyous unity—it was a gigantic task! Seward and Chase and Stanton did their appointed work and they did it well. Grant and Sherman and Farragut accomplished their terrible task with thoroughness. Henry Ward Beecher, William Lloyd Garrison and Harriet Beecher Stowe, to each one of these belongs a place of honor! And to a great unnumbered host of plain men and women who fought and thought, who gave and prayed for the Union, to each one of these our gratitude is due! But to one man more than all the rest belongs the highest place in that struggle and I named him that night as the greatest man of the Nineteenth Century, the first martyred President, Abraham Lincoln.

Now I hope that this choice did not proceed simply from the fact that I am an American myself and love my own country and its people as I could love no other. And I feel that I am a good deal of an American. My family has been here a long time. My ancestors landed at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. They had their trunks all unpacked and their household arrangements all in good running order when those Pilgrim Fathers finally got around in 1620. We were glad to see them when they came. They were good people and were destined to make an important contribution to the life of the Nation. But we were here first. And we have not been moving away nor dying out. I do not know how it may be with other family stocks, but I feel thoroughly sure that when Gabriel blows his trumpet, in every telephone book and city directory from Eastport, Maine, to San Diego, Califor-

nia, there will still be pages and pages of "Browns."

I feel, therefore, that because I belong to a large family and to a family which has been here a long time, I am a good deal of an American. But nothing splendidly human is ever foreign to any lover of his race. I have tried to study the work of great men in other lands.

I hope the choice of Lincoln did not spring simply from the fact that he wrought with certain issues which interest my own mind and heart more than other issues might. I have tried to study the work of great men in other fields of endeavor. From that excursion into other lands and other lines of effort I came back all the more firmly persuaded that the highest place of honor in the Nineteenth Century belongs to that President of the United States.

The very title was his in a distinctive

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way. No man before his time had ever been "President of the United States" in the sense that Lincoln was, nor has any man been since. "United States" they were up to 1860! "United States" they were in his determined and insistent mind during all those troubled years of '61-5, for he maintained that the Southern States had not gone out of the Union and that they could not by any act of theirs go out. And "United States" they are to-day, thanks to him and to those who wrought with him—"United" as we trust for all time! He was, in a very distinctive way, President of the United States.

Now, before I enter upon the discussion of what I regard as the four main elements in Lincoln's greatness, it may be profitable to recall some of the difficulties which confronted him at the beginning of his administration. In my judgment no President from the immortal Washington down to Woodrow Wilson has ever been

confronted by a crisis more grave. Take into consideration these six important facts!

1. He found an empty treasury, the public credit sadly impaired by the secession of eleven prosperous States, and he had upon his hands one of the costliest wars of modern times to be fought through and paid for in honest money.

2. He found himself at the head of an inexperienced party. The Republican Party or the Whig Party had been out of power. The Democratic Party had been in control of the National Government. It is one thing to stand off and criticize and find fault with the manner in which some other party or some other man is doing a certain thing. Almost anyone can criticize the other fellow, whether the performance is making a speech, or running a newspaper, or poking the fire. But to get in and do the thing better than the

other man was doing it is quite another matter. The Republican Party suddenly found itself taken out of the attitude of opposition and criticism to be placed in the responsible control of the National Government at a great crisis in our history. And it was for the most part without experience.

3. Lincoln found himself supported or burdened, according to one's point of view, by a set of counselors in his Cabinet who were all suspicious of his ability. His Secretaries felt at the outset that Lincoln did not know enough to be President of the United States. They said that he was "a raw western man" who had come East. They insisted that his manners were awkward and that his clothes did not fit him. They maintained that he told too many stories and cracked too many jokes for a man in public life. And they were all profoundly sure at the start that he would be humbly grateful to them if

they would only tell him what to do. If Lincoln had not been so genuinely great he would have been advised to death in the first year of his administration.

4. He found the public opinion of Europe on the whole unfriendly to the North. The European bankers were hesitating over our bonds and the European governments, many of them, were on the very edge of acknowledging the Southern Confederacy as a sovereign nation. There seemed to be an ill-disguised feeling of satisfaction over what they regarded as "the collapse of the American experiment in popular government." Even in England, our long-time friend, up to the day when Henry Ward Beecher went abroad to give his great addresses in Manchester and Birmingham, in Liverpool and London, the general feeling was more friendly to the South than to the North. The English aristocracy sympathized with the aristocrats of the South. The cotton opera-

tives in Manchester were angry because the supply of raw cotton had been cut off by our blockading the southern ports. The prevailing temper of Europe was hostile to the Union.

5. He found here at the North a powerful, influential section of the people who were thoroughly despondent. They were tired of the debate and the struggle over slavery and states' rights. They said, "If those southern states do not want to stay in the Union, let them take their slaves and go out, rather than fight about it. Let us have peace." The confusion and discouragement in the northern mind was a serious obstacle in Lincoln's pathway.

6. He found a powerful, resolute section of the Union up in armed revolt against the government which he had sworn to protect and to preserve.

Now, take those six facts together—the empty treasury, the inexperienced

party, the distrustful cabinet, the unfriendliness in Europe, the despondency in the North, and the armed rebellion at the South—they present a combination of difficulties sufficiently grave to test the title to greatness of any man who might be called upon to meet them.

Now, with those facts clearly in mind, let me name what I would regard as the four main elements in Lincoln's greatness.

First, his combination of lofty idealism with practical sagacity in bringing things to pass. He had his ideals. They hung in his sky as definite and as illuminating as the visions of a seer. The abolition of slavery, the preservation of the Union, the healing of the breach between the North and the South, the welfare of the entire American people! Toward those ideals he steadfastly set his face. But he was always a concrete rather than an abstract idealist. He had a way of seeing

what ought to be and of seeing how it could be. Then he showed himself able to get in and do it. This combination of lofty idealism which gave him the moral passion of a saint or a reformer, together with the well-seasoned sagacity of a practiced diplomat, made him a statesman of the first order.

He was a great man and he was a good man. If we were starting out to canonize some of our American Protestant saints I should be in favor of beginning with Abraham Lincoln. But his goodness was always of the homely, useful type. It was not the abstract, doctrinaire, John the Baptist sort of goodness which demands for its exercise that it be taken off into the desert to live on locusts and wild honey without wife or child, without citizenship or business connection or any of the normal relationships of life. Like the Son of Man, Abraham Lincoln "came eating and drinking." He came building his

high ideals into an every-day order of plain fact.

He was just as desirous as Emerson ever was of hitching his wagon to a star. His Gettysburg Address and his Second Inaugural, classics they are in political utterance, show that he could hitch his wagon nowhere else than to the highest star in sight. But he was always willing to have all four wheels of the wagon on the ground. He was ready to get down and grease the axles so that his own particular wagon-load of effort might run with the least possible friction. He was there encouraging the team by such homely words of cheer as made him one of the plainest of men. He was, throughout his illustrious career, a concrete idealist.

He was accustomed to say to his cabinet, "The question, gentlemen, is not, 'Can anyone imagine anything better than this?' I have no doubt but that any one of you can. The question before us is,

'Can we do anything better at this time?' " The ideal, as he saw it, must be a practicable, a feasible ideal. He was never disposed to sit down and cry for the moon.

He wrought in the spirit of his own century's greatest poet. You will remember how Browning puts it:

"The common problem, yours, mine, everyone's,
Is not to fancy what were fair in life
Provided it could be, but finding first what may be
Then find how to make that fair, up to our means."

This quality of genius, not dwelling apart in the isolation of seeing visions and of dreaming dreams, but engaged steadily in the accomplishment of certain useful ends, seems to me to rank Lincoln above all such men as Darwin, Spencer, Emerson, Goethe. These men were free to go

into their studies or their laboratories or into the fields to think and observe, to study and to write as they chose. There was no hurry. The "Origin of Species" did not have to be issued by a certain day. The fine chapters in "The Conduct of Life," or the noblest passages of "Faust," were not suddenly called out by a hostile, insistent line of bayonets.

But upon Lincoln during all the years of his public career there rested the pressure of the necessity for the immediate accomplishment of certain definite ends. The war must be carried along, with money, millions of it, and with hundreds of thousands of men. The men and the money must be forthcoming without delay. The men had to be fed, clothed, armed, transported, and made effective in the field. The public opinion of Europe must either be changed or held back until we had settled our difficulties here at home. The public opinion of this coun-

try, flickering like a candle in the wind, now blazing up into some promise of usefulness and now threatening to go out all together, must be fed and sustained and thus made equal to the terrible demands which were being made upon it.

Now to meet successfully a situation like that would seem to be a harder task than to write a book, or to announce an idea, or to sing a song. And the combination of administrative with intellectual ability in Lincoln may well serve to give him a higher place in the world's esteem than that held by any of the great men whose names I have mentioned above.

I referred in passing to the difficulties confronting him at the beginning of his administration. It is enough to say, in a word, that he met and mastered them all. He did it not by a few shrewd exploits which would put the enemy of our country's peace in a hole, only to come

out again all the more determined because of that temporary check in his plans. He did it by years of patient, far-seeing statesmanlike effort which laid the foundation for converting the enemy of our country's peace into an abiding and an essential friend.

Before Lincoln died he had the joy of seeing the slaves all freed by his Emancipation Proclamation. He saw the Union preserved without the loss of a single state. He saw the armed rebellion brought practically to an end. He saw the great volunteer armies of Grant and Sherman ready to be mustered out and to be returned to their homes and to peaceful industry. And he must have known that to this magnificent result he, more than any other one man, had contributed.

It had told tremendously upon his strength; body, brain and heart had all been taxed to the utmost. If we were to measure his term in the White House, not

by the lapse of days, but by the consumption of vitality, it would be drawn out into a considerable portion of the allotted three score years and ten. And I feel confident that I am correct in asserting that the assassin's bullet only anticipated an event which would not have been long postponed when once the reaction from the terrible stress of war times had set in.

And if Lincoln could have looked ahead and could have foreseen the speedy end of his career, he might have said, as did the prophet of old, "It is enough! Now let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen the salvation of my people Israel." His great ideals had all become accomplished facts. I would name, therefore, as the first element in his greatness the combination of lofty idealism with practical sagacity in bringing things to pass.

The second element I would name

would be his power of comprehending men of extreme views. It was Frederick W. Robertson who used to maintain that the truth, as a rule, does not lie with either extreme. Nor does it lie (as many soft-hearted and soft-headed people like to think) with the golden mean, the half-way position, the compromise which misses the strength of both extremes. The truth, Robertson maintained, lies rather in the recognition of certain deeper underlying principles which make possible the strength of both the extremes.

Now in that quality of insight Abraham Lincoln was a past master. He had come into prominence chiefly by his anti-slavery speeches in the Douglas debates. He had been elected to the Presidency by the votes of tens of thousands of men who knew very little about him, except that he was a man who hated slavery. But the moment he was elected he refused to

be regarded as the advance agent or the general manager of the abolition movement. He refused to wear the tag of any section or of any party or of any particular school of political opinion. He insisted that now he was President of the whole United States, North and South, loyal and rebellious, bond and free. He was their President and he was there to serve their interests as best he might.

He was roundly scolded for taking this broad view of the matter by the extremists of both types. Wendell Phillips, a finished Harvard scholar, a polished Boston gentleman, a wonderful orator—in my judgment almost the finest we have produced in this land—but a man singularly defective in good judgment, scolded away at Lincoln in most abusive fashion. He called him "a mere huckster in politics." He called him "the slave-hound from Illinois" because in the

early years of his administration Lincoln allowed fugitive slaves to be returned to their masters in the border states.

And Horace Greeley, an earnest, warm-hearted, forcible, blundering man up to the day of his death, scolded away at Lincoln in the columns of the New York *Tribune,* making that paper a great hindrance when it could have been a mighty help. The New York *Tribune* at that time was the political Four Gospels, and Acts, and Epistles all bound into one, for a great many people here at the North. The old farmer out here at the Four Corners did not know exactly what he did think about things until he got his "weekly *Trybune,*" as he called it, and sat down to read what Horace Greeley had to say about it all.

Lincoln listened to them all and was unmoved by them all. He also had the abolition of slavery a good deal at heart, but he also had a responsibility which

those gentleman did not share, and which they were not always able to see. He had the Emancipation Proclamation in his heart a long, long time before his wise head approved its issuance or before his right hand wrote it out in firm lines. He knew that its hour had not yet come and so he calmly waited for the fullness of time.

Away over at the other extreme in those days were the War Democrats and other men of their way of thinking. They believed in the Union, but they had no money to spend and no blood to spill in freeing slaves. They insisted that Lincoln was saying altogether too much about abolition and was moving altogether too fast in that direction. Their scolding was ofttimes only second to that of the extreme abolitionists like Wendell Phillips and Horace Greeley.

It is rather trying to human flesh to be censured at one and the same time for

being "ultra" and "radical," and for being "lukewarm" and "hesitating." It is as confusing as the conduct of those people in the New Testament of whom it is said, "We piped unto you and ye did not dance. We wailed unto you and ye did not mourn." It required a good deal of insight in those days to know what kind of music would bring all the loyal people of this country into line. It stands to the undying credit of Abraham Lincoln that he knew. He comprehended men of extreme views and in the end was able to draw them together and utilize them by keeping to the front the deeper underlying principles.

He knew that the underlying principle in that great struggle was the preservation of the Union, the maintenance of the integrity of our country. He was accustomed to say, "If I could save the Union by freeing all of the slaves, I would do that. If I could save the Union without

freeing any of the slaves, I would do that. If I could save the Union by freeing part of the slaves and leaving the rest alone, I would do that. What I do, I do because I believe it serves the cause of the Union. And what I leave undone, I leave undone because I believe that serves the cause of the Union."

He knew full well that the Union would not "continue to exist half-slave and half-free." But he knew also that the only principle upon which he could draw together those men of extreme views was the preservation of the Union, the maintenance of the integrity of our common country.

There are people in every community who can see the flies on a barn door without ever seeing the barn door. Certain lively, buzzing details out in the foreground take up their entire attention and they miss the main fact. Lincoln could always see the barn door! He could see

the main fact in any situation! He could recognize the deeper underlying principles which were at stake and when he saw them he anchored to them.

The wisdom of his course is perfectly apparent to us now. It began to be apparent in the later years of the Civil War. In the Republican Convention of 1864, which renominated Lincoln, they very shrewdly put in as temporary Chairman, Mr. Robert C. Breckinridge, of Kentucky. He was a Southerner. He was an orator of the old school. He was an aristocrat and his social affiliations were almost entirely with the slaveholders. But he believed in the Union and because of that faith he was there at that Convention.

On taking the Chair he said, "Gentlemen of the Convention, as a Whig Party, or a Republican Party, or an Abolition Party, or an American Party, I would not go with you one step. But as a Union Party, I will go with you, if need be, to

the ends of the earth or to the gates of death." And he represented a very considerable element in this country at that time who were ready to go all lengths in the preservation of the Union.

Lincoln labored steadily to keep before the minds of the people the idea that the Southern States had not in any sense severed their connection with the Union. General McClellan reported to him on one occasion that in blocking the way so that the army of Northern Virginia could not make any aggressive effort at that time he had, "made safe Pennsylvania and Maryland and all our soil." General Meade, after the victory at Gettysburg, delayed action and allowed Lee to get back safely across the Potomac. He then telegraphed to the President that at least "he had driven the invader from our soil."

"Our soil!" exclaimed Lincoln. "When will our Generals ever get that idea out of their heads! The whole country is our

soil." His great main interest was in keeping to the front that fundamental principle in the struggle which was being made to preserve the integrity of the Nation.

There was another political convention held that same year in Cleveland, Ohio. It was made up of those who desired to nominate some northern man who would be able to defeat Lincoln at the polls. It was a mixed assemblage. The John C. Fremont men were all there. The Peace-at-any-price Party was well represented. The German radicals from St. Louis, under the leadership of B. Gratz Brown, were on hand. The Convention made a great deal of noise and the Democratic papers of the time affected to treat it with the utmost seriousness and dignity.

The delegates had a great deal to say about "the tyrant Lincoln." They denounced him for his unconstitutional acts. They adopted a good many strenuous resolutions. During the Convention this

resolution was introduced,—"Resolved, That we insist upon putting down the Rebellion at once." One pious delegate moved to amend it by inserting these words, "with God's assistance." This, however, was voted down with boisterous demonstrations of disapproval. They wanted no help from any quarter whatsoever. Then, after having denounced Lincoln repeatedly for being unconstitutional, they proceeded to nominate for President John C. Fremont and for Vice-President a man who came from the same state, apparently forgetting that the Constitution of the United States expressly prohibits the electors of any state from casting their votes for a President and a Vice-President, both of whom shall come from the same state as themselves. Then having done this unconstitutional thing they adjourned.

The people saw at once the futility of it all. Fremont had the good sense to with-

draw his name. And very speedily the whole force of the opposition there expressed faded out. But if Lincoln had allowed himself to be side-tracked by some minor issue; if he had anchored to anything less than the great main fact in that heart-breaking struggle, his first four years in the White House might have resulted in failure. He might not have been renominated or reëlected in 1864. And the whole history of our country for the last fifty years might have been a story of tragic disappointment.

His political sagacity had in it the quality of the X-ray. He could see all the way in and all the way through, and all the way down. Deep underneath the ruffling and the millinery which rested upon the surface of society in those days; deep within the warm throbbing flesh of popular feeling, he saw the solid backbone, the skeleton of political principle which alone would hold the Republic upright. And

with that he cast in his lot. I would name, therefore, as the second element in his greatness his power of comprehending and in the end of utilizing men of extreme views by keeping to the front the deeper underlying principles.

The third element I would name would be his ability to keep close to the hearts of the people in sympathetic fashion and yet lead them steadily in those lines of action which he desired them to take. It was James Russell Lowell, in his essay on Lincoln, who said that there was "a certain tone of familiar dignity, a kind of fireside plainness" about the man not only in his conversation and in his speeches but even in his state papers. He did not have the air of a man who was laying down the law to the country. He showed, rather, the attitude of one who was taking the whole country into his confidence and talking matters over with it as one neigh-

bor might discuss the questions of the day over the back fence with his neighbor. His word was ever "Come, now, let us reason together about this matter."

He respected the people too much to bully them. He respected the people too much to flatter them. There was in him nothing of the demagogue. He reasoned with them in serious fashion and in confident expectation that the same considerations which had persuaded his mind would persuade theirs. In that way he gathered to himself their consent and approval. On the day that he died I suppose he was the most absolute ruler in Christendom. Never a Czar of all the Russias had such power over his people as Abraham Lincoln had over the loyal people of this land.

Now that is leadership of the highest type. The finest quality of leadership, whether it be in ward politics, or in a Woman's Club, or in a baseball nine, is

not the leadership which goes about fussy and bossy insisting constantly on having its own way. It is the leadership which offers its suggestions and policies so quietly, unobtrusively, and winsomely that the people accept them and act upon them without realizing that they are being led. They see the whole matter so clearly that they feel as if they were merely following the wise dictates of their own judgment.

Napoleon Bonaparte was a great leader of men, but he depended for his power of leadership upon his personal magnetism, upon the brute strength of his own dominant will, and upon a rapid succession of victories. When the victories ceased, his power of leadership was gone. Lincoln knew that in a democracy public sentiment would rule. He knew also that public sentiment to be reliable must be informed and persuaded. He, therefore, proceeded in that cautious, sure-footed way which was characteristic of him. He

was like a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. He was never in such a hurry as to run off and get out of sight of his Israelites. He did not, on the other hand, allow them to lag back. He kept himself in sympathetic relations with the people, but kept them moving steadily toward the goal he had in view.

The influence of this habit of mind had even penetrated the South. The fact that Lincoln was not the agent of any particular party or section, but the President of the whole United States, had come to be felt all over the land. A certain appreciation of his justice, fairness, wisdom and mercy had begun to weaken the morale of General Lee's army long before it reached Appomattox.

In the Fall of 1864 the southern soldiers in the trenches around Richmond and Petersburg heard cheering over in the northern lines. They knew what the Union soldiers were cheering about—they

knew that they were cheering over the reelection of Abraham Lincoln. And they knew also that this meant the speedy downfall of the Confederacy. The leaders were still defiant but the common people were making ready to give up the unprofitable struggle. Their mood was reflected in the price of Confederate money. During the war it had taken thirty-five dollars of Confederate paper to purchase a dollar in gold. After the reëlection of Lincoln it took fifty, then sixty, then seventy, and then nobody wanted it. This registered the sober judgment of the business men of the South as to the effect of the reëlection of Lincoln upon the fate of the Confederacy.

His leadership was much less showy and dramatic than the movements of Napoleon, but wherever Lincoln went he took the country with him. When he died the soul of the movement to which he had given his life went marching on. It had

already become incarnate in that whole body of political sentiment and conviction which now ruled the North.

His successful maintenance of this sympathetic touch with the people was due, in large measure, to these three qualities: His integrity, high and holy enough for all its tasks, yet sufficiently simple to walk upon the ground! His common sense! We call it "common," I do not know why; it is anything but common. I mean the plain straightforward way of looking at things and of saying things. When Lincoln talked, the people knew exactly what he was driving at. They did not have to have an English translation of it. He never used those long words which would not go into a suitcase without being folded twice. He used the short, terse, expressive words of the King James Bible and of Shakespeare, the two volumes which he read most. He was a man of great common sense. And in the third place, his

sense of humor, of which he had a very abundant store! It sometimes became a source of irritation to serious-minded men like Seward and Stanton in the stress of war times. It was one of the ways in which Lincoln sought a momentary relief from the severe mental strain of his high office.

There is something about the psychology of an average American which warms up to a combination like that. Give a man integrity, common sense, and a sense of humor, and he has in him the main essentials necessary for leadership.

This combination enabled Lincoln to put things in a terse, meaty, sententious way which the common people would hear gladly and carry away readily in their minds. I will venture to recall a few striking instances of this quality of mind.

During the years preceding the Civil War much was said about "the natural inferiority of the colored race." The peo-

ple were also sensitive about the idea of "negro equality" and the possibility of intermarriage between the negroes and the whites. A very common way to challenge the position of an abolitionist in New England was to say to him, "How would you like to have a negro woman for your wife? How would you like to have a negro marry your daughter?" In the famous Illinois debates Stephen A. Douglas had harped upon the natural and permanent inferiority of the colored race.

At one of their meetings Lincoln replied to these arguments against abolition in these words: "I agree with my friend Judge Douglas that the negro is not in all respects my equal—certainly not in color and perhaps not at this time in intellectual or in moral endowment. But in his right to eat the bread which his own right hand earns without asking the leave of any other man, he is my equal and the equal of Judge Douglas and the equal of

every living man. As to intermarriage, I do not understand that because I do not want a negro woman for a slave, I must necessarily want her for a wife. My understanding is that I can just let her alone. And I have no fears that I or that any of my friends would marry negro women even though there was no law to prevent it. But as Judge Douglas and his friends seem to have apprehensions that they might, I give him my word that I will stand to the last by the law of the State of Illinois which forbids the marriage of blacks and whites." These words were widely quoted in the North and after that we did not hear so much about the natural inferiority of the colored race, or about the possible social consequences of abolition.

The same quality of mind appeared in his treatment of the Mason and Slidell Affair. You will remember that Mason and Slidell, two Southern gentlemen on

their way to Europe, were forcibly taken from the British ship *Trent* by one of our northern cruisers. Great Britain insisted that her rights as a neutral had been invaded and demanded that the men should be given up. This was done and it was altogether right. But the people were sensitive and many felt that Great Britain had taken advantage of our unhappy civil strife to inflict upon this country an open insult.

When Lincoln came to a certain Cabinet meeting he found his Secretaries angrily discussing the incident. They were in a mood to make an immediate demand upon Great Britain for reparation or at least for an apology. If this should not be forthcoming, they insisted that war should be declared upon England at once. Lincoln listened to the discussion for a time and then remarked quietly, "Gentlemen, doesn't it seem to you that one war at a time is enough?" One war at a time!

This was the headline in all the morning papers at the North next day and it did more to cool the country off and to bring it to its senses than a state document as long as the book of Jeremiah would have done. The people decided that "one war at a time" was quite enough—and that was the last of that incident.

The President used great tact throughout in keeping the border states, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri, in the Union. Their sympathies, in large part, were with the South, but it was much easier to bring the struggle to a successful conclusion with those three states in the Union than it would have been had they joined the Confederacy. Now and then their slaves ran off and the question of returning or of not returning fugitive slaves to their masters held tremendous possibilities of trouble. Lincoln once replied to an angry inquiry, touching some fugitive slaves who had escaped across the

border, in these homely words: "You people are slowly finding out that two-legged property is a very poor sort of property to own."

In the early days of the war the inactivity of General McClellan became a thorn in the flesh for all zealous Northerners. He was in command of the Army of the Potomac. He was a splendid drill master, a fine disciplinarian. He took good care of his men and improved the morale of the army from month to month. But he was forever calling for "more troops" and was not doing anything aggressive. "All quiet on the Potomac"—this was the report which came back and kept on coming back, until the people were thoroughly sick of it. It was not "quiet on the Potomac" which they desired. They had sent their husbands and their sons, their brothers and their lovers to the front and they desired to hear about some decisive action against the army of

General Robert E. Lee in northern Virginia.

The patience of Lincoln was finally exhausted—and I suppose since the time of Job he might be written down as the most patient man in history. He sent out in very informal fashion this message to General McClellan: "If General McClellan is not going to use the Army of the Potomac for a while, I would like to borrow it for a day or two and see what I could do with it." This was not exactly a plan of campaign or an official order from the Commander-in-chief of the Northern Forces, but it was a very suggestive message, very stimulating. And from that time on General McClellan found it in his heart to do something more aggressive against the army of Lee.

I will only relate one more—I have never seen this story in print. I would not undertake to say that it has not appeared in some form, because so many

Lincoln stories are printed every year during the month of February in the newspapers and in the magazines of the country. I have read nearly all of the "Lives of Lincoln" which have appeared in book form and I have never seen this story published.

It was my good fortune once to make a long sea voyage on the same vessel with Mr. Frederick W. Seward. He was the son of William H. Seward, our Secretary of State during the Civil War. He was acting Secretary of State during his father's illness. One day in the Captain's room Mr. Frederick Seward related to a small group of us who had become acquainted with him a number of interesting stories about the closing months of Lincoln's administration.

There was a certain measure in which the President believed strongly. He brought it one afternoon into a Cabinet meeting. He found that his Secretaries,

to the last man, were all strongly opposed to it. He spent considerable time explaining it and seeking to bring them to his way of thinking, but apparently without much effect. The time came, however, when a vote must be taken as other business had to be transacted. Lincoln put the motion: "All those in favor of this measure will say, Aye." The Secretaries sat there as silent and as well-behaved as a company of nuns at Vespers. "All those who are opposed will say, No." Every man instantly voted a stout, loud, "No." There came a look of disappointment in the President's face and then a twinkle in his eye. After a significant pause he remarked, "The Ayes seem to have it. The motion is carried."

The very audacity of the man! The undaunted strength of his own conviction awed them rather than offended them. They looked at him, leaned back in their chairs and laughed and allowed the mo-

tion to be put down in the minutes as having been "carried." It proved to be a wise measure and before the month had passed it won the hearty support of every man in the Cabinet. But I suppose Abraham Lincoln was the only man on earth who could have gotten that measure through that Cabinet that afternoon as having been carried.

He knew what was in man and needed not that others should tell him. He knew where the cords of the human heart are and how he could play upon them to produce the music he desired to hear. He knew how to phrase a statement in such a way as to make it carry. I suppose outside of the Scriptures and Shakespeare no writer or speaker has ever been so widely quoted here in the United States as Abraham Lincoln.

As a leader of men he moved slowly, feeling his way at times rather than rushing ahead in pellmell fashion after the

manner of ill-advised reformers. He kept ahead of the people, but not too far ahead. His method at this point has been finely indicated by Ralph Waldo Emerson:

"Here was place for no fair weather sailor—the new pilot was called to the helm in a tornado. In four stormy years his endurance, his fertility of resource, his magnanimity were sorely tried and never found wanting. By his courage, his justice, his even temper, his fertile counsel, his humanity, he stood a heroic figure in the center of a heroic epoch. He is the true history of the American people in his time. Step by step he walked before them, slow with their slowness, quickening his march by theirs, the true representative of this continent, an entirely public man, the father of his country, the pulse of twenty millions throbbing in his heart, the thought of their minds articulated by his tongue."

It requires study and reflection to appreciate adequately the true value of that type of leadership. History often appears simple and easy to those who read it from some safe distance. We can see exactly what the great men ought to have done at every juncture and we can draw the appropriate moral. I fancy, however, that to the men who were making that history the issues were not always so clear. For them it was not like steering one's boat in broad daylight through a well-charted stream.

We can turn back to-day and read the history of the Civil War with great peace of mind. Even in the darkest days we know that Appomattox, reconstruction and a reunited country are just ahead. We can come out into the open at any time by simply turning over a handful of leaves. But to Abraham Lincoln, who did not know of a surety that Appomattox and a reunited country were on the way,

the making of all that history a day at a time, an hour at a time, an act at a time, and the acceptance of the full responsibility for his course, was quite another matter. I name, therefore, as the third element in his greatness, his power of holding himself close to the hearts of the people, whom he trusted and served, and of guiding them steadily in those lines of action which he desired them to take.

The final element in his greatness which I would name was his political unselfishness and moral integrity. He was both great and good. The main issues with him were the preservation of the Union, the abolition of slavery, the welfare of the whole American people, rather than the success or the fame or the political advancement of Abraham Lincoln. He desired not that he might save the country but that the country might be saved, let

the credit for the achievement go where it would.

He felt the full sense of his responsibility in that tenure of office. The South had said in 1860, "The election of Lincoln means secession." When Lincoln became President the Southern States, according to their threat, began to pass their Acts of Secession. Lincoln must have asked himself: "Am I to end the line of Presidents of the United States? If so, what will be the verdict of history upon me? Or, on the other hand, am I to be that pivotal man upon whose wisdom and strength may turn the possibility of such a Union as we have never enjoyed to this hour?" It was enough to make any man self-conscious and to fill him with an undue sense of his own importance.

It was a time of political selfishness. Even the gravity of the situation did not shame the petty ambitions of smaller men. When we take up the account of some of

the military heartburnings and squabbles of that day they make sorry reading for a patriot. There were men who seemed to be thinking more about the amount of gold on their shoulder straps than of the service they might render in the field, or the victories they might win for the flag. It is a mood which has not entirely passed. It only required two hours to fight the Battle of Santiago de Cuba in our Spanish War, but it took more than two years to settle the question as to whom the credit should be given, to Sampson or Schley. And the question has not been settled yet to everybody's satisfaction.

It was not only in military and in naval life, but in political action as well, that men sometimes betrayed the quality of selfishness. Seward, Chase, Stanton, Gideon Welles, and almost every other man of the period seemed at times to have his own little ax to grind whenever the public grindstone was not otherwise engaged—

and sometimes, alas, when it was. Among them all Lincoln bore himself steadily in the spirit of absolute disinterestedness.

He was a man of great simplicity and humility of mind. When some Secretary would resign in a fit of resentment, Lincoln would take the letter, put on his hat and go down to the Secretary's home. He would say to him in friendly fashion: "The public interest does not admit of my accepting your resignation at this time. I have come to beg you to retain your portfolio."

When I think of this quality of his character I am always reminded of a certain story. It is a story which I enjoy all the more because it was told originally by a brother minister whose face was as black as my Sunday coat. I refer to the Rev. John Jasper, who for many years was pastor of a large colored Baptist Church in the city of Richmond, Virginia.

John Jasper had not enjoyed many educational advantages in his early life, but he was a shrewd negro. He saw that the colored men in Richmond were being used by the designing politicians in their own interests. Before the election the candidates for office would go about addressing their "colored constituents" and making all manner of promises as to what would be done for the negro race if only these particular gentlemen were chosen to office. But when they were once safely elected not one of them could see a colored man across the street.

On the Sunday night before the city election, Mr. Jasper preached a sermon on the political outlook and in the course of that sermon he told this story:

"Brethren, the other night I had a dream. I dreamed that I was dead. I went to heaven, but I found it a long way from Richmond, Virginia, to heaven. I toiled along through the brush and the

briers and over the rocks until at last, through much tribulation, I reached the Gate of Heaven.

"I knocked and St. Peter said, 'Who's theah?'

" 'The Rev. John Jasper, Richmond, Virginia.'

" 'Is you a-horseback or a-foot?'

" 'I'se a-foot, Sah.'

" 'Then you cahn't come in heah—no man can come in heah except he's a'horseback.' "

Mr. Jasper said that he felt profoundly disappointed. He had been striving to live a consistent, Christian life for many years. He had been preaching the Gospel of his blessed Lord with such ability as he possessed and now to be told that he could not be admitted to heaven because he had come on foot seemed harsh. He believed, however, in the perseverance of the saints and he started back to earth to get a horse that he might come up properly.

Again he toiled along through the brush and the briers and over the rocks until, about half way down to the earth, he met General Mahone.

"Why, Gineral," he said, "is you dead, too? Whar you gwine?"

The General informed him that he was on the way to heaven. Then John Jasper explained that he would not be admitted because he was on foot. The two men stood there on the path discussing the matter until presently General Mahone said: "Now John, I'll tell you what we will do. You get down on your hands and knees and I'll get on your back. Then I'll ride you up to the Gate of Heaven. When St. Peter asks me if I am on horseback or on foot, I'll tell him I am on horseback. Then I'll ride you in and there we'll be."

This seemed like an admirable arrangement, and John Jasper, according to his dream, meekly got down on his hands and

knees and took General Mahone on his back. Then once more he toiled along through the brush and the briers and over the rocks until again he was at the Gate of Heaven.

General Mahone knocked and St. Peter said: "Who's there?"

"General Mahone, Richmond, Virginia."

"Is you a-horseback or a-foot?"

"I'se a-horseback, Sir."

"All right, General," replied St. Peter, "hitch your horse outside and walk right in."

I do not need to make the application as John Jasper made it that night to his colored congregation. I tell the story as illustrating a quality which I fear has not entirely disappeared from some of our present-day politicians. There are still men in every community who like to have the public get down on all fours that these

aspirants for office may ride them for their own advantage.

I tell this story as illustrating a quality of which not one shred can be found in the make-up of Abraham Lincoln. He had no desire that the American people should get down on all fours that he might ride them for his own advantage. He desired rather than he might take upon himself the form of a servant and stoop down in patient fashion to minister to their welfare. He lived in the spirit of that Book which John Hay, his Secretary, tells us lay always on his desk—a book in which he was accustomed to read every day. The Book says: "He that saveth his life shall lose it. But he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." Lincoln found himself; he found his place in the hearts of his countrymen; and he found his secure niche in the Temple of Fame because he lived and died to serve. He

was a man of moral integrity and of sublime unselfishness.

How warm were his sympathies with the suffering and how delicately he could phrase them upon occasion! Read this letter written to Mrs. Byxbee, the mother of the five sons who had given their lives to the cause of the Union:

"I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from your grief for a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation which may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and the

lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom."

How deeply religious the man was in all the essential attitudes of his spirit! His closing words in the Second Inaugural might, in their sweep and finish, in their moral tone and their spiritual insight, have come from one of the greatest of the old Hebrew prophets.

"Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsmen's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid with another drawn by the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'

"With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right—let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan; to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations."

In discussing these elements of Lincoln's greatness I have not paused at each point to make comparison between him and the other great men of that period. He would easily bear comparison with the greatest men of the century. Napoleon was a great man and a large part of his life came in the Nineteenth Century. But the growing verdict upon him is that he was selfish, cruel, and in his domestic relations absolutely heartless. Lincoln was as tender-hearted as a woman. Goethe

was a great writer,—I believe the greatest writer of the Nineteenth Century,—but his private life was not clean. His warmest admirers are compelled to apologize for certain phases of his conduct and character. Lincoln's life was clean—the American people will never have to blush for Abraham Lincoln. Darwin and Spencer were great men, but great chiefly because of their association with a certain idea, the idea of organic evolution which was about to be announced by another investigator, Wallace. The greatness lay in the idea rather than in the personalities of these two men. Somehow Lincoln combined the intellectual, the administrative, and the moral in such a degree that nowhere in the Nineteenth Century do I find any other man so truly great.

His combination of lofty idealism with practical sagacity in bringing things to pass; his ability to comprehend and in the end to utilize men of extreme views

by keeping to the front the deeper underlying principles and the main issues; his power of holding himself close to the hearts of the people in sympathetic fashion and yet of guiding them steadily and wisely in those lines of action he desired them to take; his political unselfishness and moral integrity—he invested these fine qualities in a momentous period of our nation's history and in the light of what he was and of what he did I am led to ascribe to him more of personal greatness and of abiding usefulness than belongs to any other man of the Nineteenth Century.

In this discussion I have tried to free my mind altogether from any partisan feeling or sectional prejudice or personal bias. I ought to be able to do this very readily. I come from the other side of Mason and Dixon's line—I was born in the old state of Virginia. My father believed in the Union, but his father, my

grandfather, sympathized fully with the slaveholders and believed in the principles of the Confederacy as long as he lived. Some of my earliest recollections as a child are of seeing that aged grandfather as he sat reading Pollard's "Lost Cause," one of the favorite Southern histories of the Confederacy in that day. I have seen the tears stream down his cheeks over what had been to him the greatest disappointment of his life, the failure of the Southern Confederacy. I remember how there hung in his bedroom up to the day of his death that picture which is so well known throughout the South, the picture of General Robert E. Lee at the grave of "Stonewall" Jackson.

It was into that family and into the midst of those sentiments and traditions that I was born. In the family gatherings during my childhood I heard the events of recent history discussed from a point of view far removed from that

held by anyone who may read this book. But when I became old enough to read history for myself and to think and to compare, I came gradually to believe that the greatest man in the Nineteenth Century, and one of the greatest men in all the centuries, was that same Abraham Lincoln who defeated the desires of my Southern ancestors and kept all our stars together in one common field of blue.

The great humanity of the man! How it has touched the heart of the whole world, North, South, East, and West! I have given this address in Tennessee, meeting with the same response there that I have enjoyed in Massachusetts, in Iowa, or in California. The great humanity of the man had begun to touch the heart of the whole world at the time of his death. In those strange sad days of April, 1865, wherever men had learned to read, the feeling was that the human race had lost a friend.

Queen Victoria, departing from the stately etiquette of her English Court, wrote out with her own right hand a message of condolence to Mrs. Lincoln: "As a widow to a widow, I write," she said, thinking of her own bereavement in the death of the good Prince Albert. This was the feeling at one end of the social scale. And away down at the other end there grew up among some of the simple, untutored, superstitious people who lived in a certain community not far from Springfield, Illinois, this tradition which persisted for decades—they said that the brown thrushes in the hedges out there did not sing for a whole year after Lincoln was shot. The great humanity of the man was touching the heart of the whole world.

Now in closing may I suggest a certain parallel! I do it with the utmost reverence, and I trust, without the slightest offense to the religious sentiments of any-

one who may read these lines. I am not instituting a comparison, but I would suggest a certain parallel between the life of the greatest man of the Nineteenth Century and the life of the Greatest of all the Centuries, the Son of Man.

Both were of humble birth. God makes his great ones from the dust of the ground, breathing into their nostrils the breath of his own mighty life as they become living souls.

Lincoln's birthplace was a log cabin and Jesus was born in the manger of a stable.

Lincoln's father was a carpenter by trade and Jesus is referred to in the Gospels as "the son of the carpenter."

The words which Jesus used in his opening address there in the synagogue at Nazareth might have been incorporated bodily into Lincoln's First Inaugural. "The spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to preach good

tidings to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and to set at liberty them that are bruised."

Both Lincoln and Jesus were lovers and users of the story, the parable, the homely saying which the common people would hear gladly and readily carry away in their minds.

Both Lincoln and Jesus were hindered in their work by the moral extremists and bigots on the one hand and by the moral dullards and slow of heart to believe the good things God had in store for the people, on the other.

Of Lincoln's personal appearance it might have been said as it was said of the promised Messiah: "There is no form nor comeliness in him that we should desire him."

The characteristic gravity of Lincoln's face and the sadness which sat upon him almost overpoweringly during his years in

the White House, how it reminds us incessantly of the One who was called "A Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief."

And to complete that significant parallel, you will all remember that it was on Good Friday, the anniversary of the Crucifixion of the Savior of Mankind, that Lincoln met his death. It would seem as if somehow in the Nineteenth Century as in the First, there could be no remission of the dreadful sin of slavery without the shedding of blood and the most precious blood we had.

What a strange suggestive parallel! It seems no accident that the American Lincoln bore the Hebrew name of Abraham, Father of the Faithful in whose work for righteousness all the nations of the earth have been blessed. It seems no accident that when Lincoln entered the city of Richmond near the close of his life, as Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem in the last week of his earthly life, the colored

people of Richmond were almost ready to fall down and hail him as a kind of second Messiah to their race. He surely marks one of the highest reaches of that Christian civilization which the coming of the Son of Man made possible.

In that Convention of 1864 which renominated Lincoln the long nominating speeches which we know to-day had not come into vogue. When the time came for the presentation of the names of candidates, the Chairman of the Illinois Delegation stood up and without coming forward, said this: "The people of the State of Illinois present to the people of the United States as candidate for the Presidency the name of Abraham Lincoln —God bless him!" Then he sat down. I would present to you as candidate for the place of highest honor in the Nineteenth Century, the name of Abraham Lincoln—God bless him!

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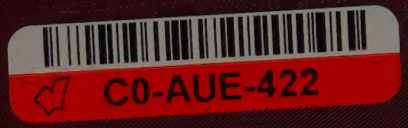
Brown, Charles Reynolds, 1862-1950
Lincoln, the greatest man of the nineteenth century / by Charles Reynolds Brown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